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NOTES

THE TIN-PEDDLER

Among the factors that have promoted industry in New England one is usually overlooked, namely, the service rendered by the Yankee tin-peddler in marketing the products of the manufacturing plants. This service is generally ignored because the doer of the service has such an unsavory reputation for sharp tricks. The peddler's personality has overshadowed his real worth to the community. But let us, for a few moments, examine the effect of his work in building the industrial foundations of his state.

In Connecticut few places outside the rich river valleys where the first colonists had settled gave adequate return for the efforts of farmers in tilling the thin, rocky soil.¹ The settlers were thus compelled to find employment other than farming, or to emigrate to lands more generously endowed by nature.² One of the earliest breaks from the traditional occupation of agriculture was the manufacture of tinware. This industry was introduced at Berlin, Conn., in 1740 by two Irish immigrants, the brothers William and Edward Pattison, who imported sheet tin from England and worked it into kitchen utensils at their Berlin home.³ Since all tinware had previously been imported, and was very expensive, the brothers' cheaper articles found a ready sale. When their home market had been supplied, they began the practice of making journeys on foot to near-by settlements, with their wares carried on their backs in a sack. The success of these ventures induced other Berliners to make tin and carry it to neighboring colonies. At

¹ Anderson, *History Town and City of Waterbury, Conn.*; and James Sillman, *Remarks on a Short Tour between Hartford and Quebec in 1819*, New Haven, Conn., 1824.

² Pease and Niles, *Gazetteer of States of Connecticut and Rhode Island*, Hartford, 1819.

³ Bishop, *History American Manufactures*; Camp, *History of New Britain, Conn.*; Pease and Niles, *op. cit.*

first the journeys were made on foot, then on horseback, and finally in an ingeniously arranged wagon.¹ As the country was opened, and turnpikes and canals were built, the peddler's wagon traveled farther and farther from home. Gradually a distributing organization was perfected that reached every village and remote hamlet, and the psalm-singing, bare-boned Yankee trader was known everywhere.² Manufacturing tin was a simple matter. Four or five men working in Connecticut sufficed to keep several times that number of "road men" supplied. The peddlers were not free lances trading as individuals but each was connected with some small shop back in Connecticut to which he returned with his gains, and where he replenished his stock. At the height of its perfection the tin-trading organization had supply stations at such strategic points as Montreal, Richmond, Charlestown, or Albany.³ Starting from Connecticut in the spring, the peddlers gradually worked toward these depots as fall approached. After restocking their wagons, and handing over their profits to agents, the peddlers would strike into the interior and go on until everything they had was sold, including their horse and wagon.⁴ Then they would return home.

As an industry tin manufacturing was too simple to become very important, although it continued in Connecticut until 1850.⁵ But the selling organization built up for tin was very important because it provided an adequate outlet for other industries in which the manufacturing processes were not simple, and which employed more and more men at home. It was in building up these industries that have been permanent valuable assets to the state, by enabling the products of the industries to reach their markets, that the peddler's great service was rendered. Lack of transportation was the greatest natural throttle to early American manufacturing. Carrying charges soon ate up any profits an

¹ Lathrop, *The Brass Industry*.

² Johnson, *History of Connecticut*.

³ Lathrop, *op. cit.*

⁴ Johnson, *op. cit.*

⁵ Arthur and Carpenter, *History of Connecticut*, Philadelphia.

industry might have, and limited it to a very narrow local field.¹ However, if those products were small in bulk, with a relatively high value and a brisk demand, transportation difficulties were solved by placing the articles in the hands of the peddler. Bad roads and danger did not deter him from going wherever two or three people were gathered together. The things Connecticut made were all small, classed as "Yankee notions," and reached their market along with tin pans.² If there had been no peddler there would have been no way for the producers of the goods to reach the consumers, and hence no production.

Among the industries fostered by the peddler, mention might be made of the manufacturing of brass.³ This began with the making of brass buttons, and expanded to the making of brass kettles, brass lamps, hooks and eyes, and pins.⁴ All of these articles could easily be carried on the tinware wagon, and were sold in that manner.⁵ The Connecticut clock industry had similar beginnings. The tall "grandfather" clock was gradually shortened and cheapened so it could be placed on a shelf and afforded by everyone.⁶ Peddlers became nearly as famous for clocks and as clock "tinkerers" as they were for tinware. In the field of luxuries, the peddler carried Connecticut-made silver knives, forks, and spoons, after the method of silver plating on a German silver foundation was discovered.⁷ As with these so with many industries.

Today the peddler is seldom seen. Railroads and cross-country trolley freight lines have driven him out of existence. In remote communities occasionally he may be met. In his time he rendered the service of transportation agent and salesman, linking scattered consumers to producers and giving to incipient manufacture the

¹ Coman, *Industrial History of United States*.

² *Encyclopedia Americana*.

³ Lathrop, *op. cit.*

⁴ The first brass kettle made in Connecticut is now in the possession of Mr. Frank Cooper, Seymour, Conn.

⁵ Anderson, *op. cit.*

⁶ Jerome, *History of American Clock Business*.

⁷ Anderson, *op. cit.*

opportunities of a widened market. As such the peddler should be recognized, while his wiles and trickeries should pass into oblivion.

R. MALCOLM KEIR

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

WASHINGTON NOTES

THE PACIFIC RAILWAYS DISSOLUTION

On February 6, the terms of the final settlement in the Union Pacific-Southern Pacific dissolution controversy were made public at the offices of the Pacific roads in New York City. In a general way, the elements of the plan mapped out with the approval of the authorities are as follows:

The purchase by the Union Pacific of the entire capital stock of the Central Pacific, consisting of \$67,275,500 par value of common and \$17,400,000 par value of preferred, for the sum of \$104,189,941, the cost at which it stands upon the books of the Southern Pacific Company. About \$84,675,500 of this amount was to have been paid in stock of the Southern Pacific Company held by Union Pacific at par, but legal difficulties having been found in the way, the plan was changed so that payment is to be made as follows, viz., \$126,650,000 par value—being the entire amount of stock of the Southern Pacific Company held by the Union Pacific—is to be offered to the stockholders, common and preferred, of the Union Pacific Company and stockholders of the Southern Pacific Company other than the Union Pacific and Oregon Short Line for subscription at 98½ per cent and accrued dividend. This offer is to be underwritten and subscribers are to receive the dividend payable April 1, 1913. The proceeds of \$84,675,500 of this stock, less the underwriting commission and expenses, is to be paid over to the Southern Pacific Company, together with \$5,449,000 of the Southern Pacific Company's 4 per cent gold bonds and \$14,065,441 in cash.

Vice-President Kruttschnitt, of the Southern Pacific Railway Co., in discussing the sale of the Central Pacific stock by the Southern Pacific Company, states that in his opinion and in that of the officers of the Southern Pacific Company, the net earning capacity of the Southern Pacific Company is not likely to be decreased as a result of this sale, and that its financial position is greatly strengthened by the payment to it of so large a sum in cash. While the directors have not decided what disposition to make of this money, a considerable part of it will be needed in the near future to pay for extensions, for equipment, and for additions and betterments which will materially add to its earning capacity. The amount is sufficient to take care of future requirements, without increase of fixed charges.